2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

level. There are also many village clerks and teachers who speak English to their children to help prepare them for school, for a sound command of English is a prerequisite to social advancement.

It is quite true that education has been given greater emphasis in the urban areas than in the villages; but the introduction of compulsory education between the ages of six and fourteen is rapidly closing this gap. The spread of education is reflected in the decline of illiteracy. In 1948, just two years after the introduction of compulsory education, 16 per cent of the population of Valletta and Sliema over fourteen years of age, and 47 per cent of the same age group in Gozo, were illiterate. By 1957, these figures had fallen to 9 per cent and 22 per cent respectively. During the same period, the national illiteracy rate declined from 37 per cent to 17 per cent.[1]

A number of other forces operate to reduce the social distance between town and country. The greater employment opportunities during and after the war, and the continuous improvement in public transport that allowed the villagers to take advantage of them, have placed an ever-increasing number of villagers alongside townsmen at desks and work benches. The war itself was a major force in the same direction, for British troops and people from the urban areas were evacuated to the country to escape the bombing attacks, and so shared the life of their rural neighbours. All learned a good deal from one another. It is not surprising, therefore, that many Maltese, especially in the villages, regard the last war as a social milestone, a dividing line between past dependence upon agriculture and present wage labour, between poverty and relative prosperity.

II

The inhabitants of the villages in Malta no longer derive their livelihood from agriculture, though this was the rule a century ago. Today most are semi-skilled and unskilled industrial labourers who work outside their villages for the Malta Government, the

[1] *Eleventh Census of the Maltese Islands, 1948* (Valletta, Progress Press), pp. 297 ff.; and *1957 Census of the Maltese Islands: Report on Population and Housing* (Valletta, Central Office of Statistics, 1958), pp. 41 ff. The two sets of figures are not quite comparable. Those for 1948 represent the total number of illiterates, while the 1957 figures show only the number of people who never attended school.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

a very different role from that of their Spanish counterparts, the Civil Guard, whom Kenny describes as 'the traditional enemy of the peasants'.[1]

III

The very considerable authority of the Church in Malta is derived not from law, but from the loyalty of a people who fervently practise their religion. Until recently, there had never been a separation in their minds between Church and State, between the religious and secular elements in their daily lives. The Church, as we have already observed, has occupied this position for many centuries. Its power is bolstered by its considerable wealth, for in Malta the rich property and lands of the Church have not been expropriated by the State, as they have in so many other Catholic countries.[2]

As the official representative of the Church, the parish priest occupies a position of great importance in his community. He has authority in all religious matters affecting his parishioners. He ministers to their spiritual and often to their personal needs. He alone can arrange for the important ceremonies which mark the stages in their lives. These *rites de passage* include baptism, confirmation, marriage, death and burial. He also controls the many ritual activities of the village as a whole. These are the daily services of worship and the ceremonies, processions and feasts by which all Maltese, but above all the countrymen, regulate their days and mark the divisions of the year. Through his preaching and admonition he defines, interprets and enforces the moral code of the Church. He is also the official custodian of the richly decorated parish church.

Besides this dependence on the parish priest in the religious matters which are of such vital importance in the lives of a devoutly Catholic people, the country people have traditionally looked to him for assistance in many secular fields. Until only a few decades ago, he was often one of the few literate persons in his parish. As such he was frequently asked to read and write letters.

[1] Op. cit., p. 48.

[2] Mitchell estimates that the Church owns 22 per cent of the agricultural land in Malta and 12 per cent in Gozo. See Peter K. Mitchell, *The Maltese Farm*, vol. II of *Studies in the Agrarian Geography of Malta* (mimeographed; Dept. of Geography, Durham Colleges in the University of Durham, 1939), p. 130.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

letters. His high standing in the village, and his contacts with people of influence and power outside it, led people to turn to him for advice. He was asked to represent them in their relations with the outside world. In this capacity he served his parishioners as lawyer, banker and business adviser. He was also the traditional dispenser of charity.

The increasing literacy of the people and their ever-widening range of contacts outside the limits of the parish has somewhat reduced their dependence upon the parish priest. The State's recent involvement in welfare and charity has further weakened it. But if this dependence has been reduced, it has most certainly not been eliminated. Many still call on him to divide inheritances, to argue their claims against the government or to plead with prospective employers, and not a few expect him to be able to secure better roads, new schools, sewerage and playgrounds.

Thus the parish priest is the village's chief spokesman, and many still refer to him as *il-principal tar-rahal*, 'the head of the village'. The government has long recognized this, and makes use of him as a convenient contact with the people. Each Sunday morning, in addition to his own official announcements, the parish priest reads from the altar government notices advising the people of forthcoming elections, immunization campaigns, agricultural extension lectures and so on.

But if the parish priest performs numerous services for his parishioners, both individually and collectively, he has also the power to refuse them. The sanctions with which he can punish disobedience are considerable. They range from declining to write a good conduct certificate to denying absolution in confession. On the other hand, he has the power to give rewards for services rendered. Aside from doing favours for people who have helped him, he can appoint them to offices which confer prestige and authority and, in some cases, are also financially rewarding. All this serves to underline and reinforce his position as a leader in the community.

Parish priests are usually outsiders, but the rest of the village clergy are natives of the communities in which they live. Unlike Catholic priests in Britain or the United States, who live in presbyteries, the diocesan clergy of Malta and Gozo live at home with their relatives. This means that they remain in constant contact with the village. They are often called on to take part in family

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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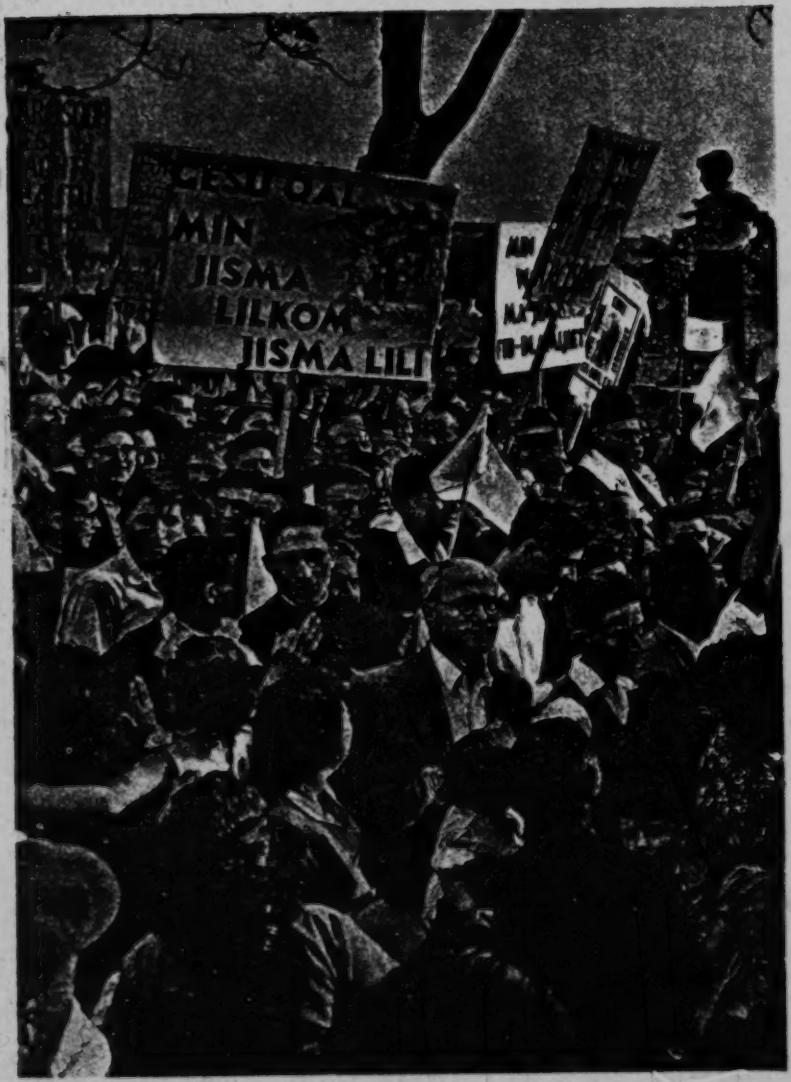

7. Demonstrations of loyalty to the Archbishop

[facing P. 96]

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

'belonging', and to a certain extent has created for them a community of their own. These persons often make up the hard core of Labour supporters in their villages, since they have nothing to lose by openly fighting the Church.

A number of sociological explanations can be advanced to account for the support professionals, white-collar workers and farmers give to the Church. First of all, professionals generally lose status in the eyes of their colleagues, if not the wider society, if they join the Labour Party or sympathize with it. It is a working-class party, and they are professionals. There are a number of notable exceptions to this, but the only professionals that I met who sympathized with the MLP were either candidates for office with it or members of the Executive. The political ideology of their colleagues and the expectations of their clients combine to make them look upon the Labour Party as the antithesis of everything they have been brought up to believe in. They, through their offices in parish associations and through their work as doctors, lawyers, high civil servants, and so on, form part of the establishment to which the Labour Party is opposed.

Much the same reasoning can be applied to the white-collar workers. As teachers, clerks and other intermediate grade civil servants they hold a relatively high position in the social hierarchy of their villages. Many are anxious to identify themselves with their social superiors, those in control of the village as well as their employers, and thus look down upon the MLP as opposed to their interests. Moreover most of them have been educated at colleges run by the Church. There their teachers gave them additional religious instruction and strengthened those values which make the anti-clerical tone of the Labour Party repugnant to them.

Farmers, on the other hand, are looked down upon by many and are regarded as underprivileged by all. Why is it then that they do not support the Labour Party? Farmers in most communities are very conservative, and those in Malta are no exception. Their solitary occupation isolates them from the Labour Party ideology which is so freely discussed among the industrial workers of Malta. Not only that, but as we have seen, they are among the most poorly educated section of the community. Many are unable to read the propaganda which the MLP disseminates through its publications. This isolation from the secular and materialistic ideologies which enter the country through the

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

critical to his election. Successful politicians repeatedly stressed to me the importance of carefully cultivating secondary preferences. As one put it, 'The first preferences keep you from being eliminated, but the secondary ones elect you.' The votes a candidate gets on subsequent counts are the result of his ability (i) to bargain with other candidates for the secondary preferences of their followers, and (ii) to set up a network of personal canvassers to secure these secondary preferences from the supporters of candidates who do not wish to release them to him. One technique that all candidates use is to encourage popular village figures to stand as mock candidates for vote-getting purposes. The understanding is that the politician is to receive their secondary preferences if they are defeated, as they usually are, since they are not generally known outside their villages. In exchange for these votes, the professional politician generally offers to pay the mock candidate's election expenses, or if elected to procure some favour for him, or both. This technique has resulted in an extraordinary number of candidates contesting every election. In 1955 a total of 140 candidates from three parties contested 40 seats; in 1962 there were 302 for six parties and 50 seats. Thus voters, many of whom are illiterate, are faced with a bewildering choice of candidates arranged alphabetically on ballots that are sometimes three feet long.

Another way for a candidate to gather secondary votes is to exchange secondary preferences with a rival. Occasionally a candidate tries to play both ends against the middle. That is, he promises his second votes to more than one of his rivals in exchange for theirs. This works very well for him if his rivals are eliminated before he is, but if he goes first, the official record of the distribution of his votes soon shows up his duplicity.

While this system of voting assures representation to all shades of political opinion, it works in several ways against the development of a strong two-party system. To begin with, it is ideally suited to the needs of the traditional patron-politician with his own localized, semi-private political organization of canvassers, mock candidates and clients. The present system of voting in combination with this organization assures him that many votes will be funnelled in to him. In the past these personal organizations ensured the re-election of politicians even if they changed parties. In fact a politician's supporters sometimes encourage him

6:Beeley K-S (1957-1958) 1959 EZ6 Malta EZ6

be suffering from economic near-strangulation because the working of his farm-unit is linked with a fluctuating but permanent element of debt. This is because the factors mentioned above as producing the need and demand for money are operating, but the farmer and his farm-unit are unable to hold their own in the present agricultural economy of Malta; this in spite of the artificial boosts of Government loans, guaranteed prices, free gifts, agricultural development schemes, information services, etc.,(Section 2).

178 434 There is a range therefore between the farmer who is proving able to advance financially and he who is not, even to the state of impoverishment. The problem of the latter may be considered from two view-points, the economic and the social. Economically, the difficulty is clear. Many farm units as they exist today cannot hope to provide an income, after expenses have been met, which will support the family and allow of expansion or even maintainance of the unit. The social problem is less easy to define. It would appear that many characteristics of the traditional peasant farming system of subsistence and independence of each farm unit still remain beneath an often thin veneer of [212] commercialization and modernization. This is related in large part to the lack of education of the farmer himself. The farmer of today in Malta is an old man and ageing who has been but little affected by the developments in education, in its widestsense, which are turning the ambitions of the present younger generation of the farming community towards the towns and towards non-agricultural pursuits. At heart, the present Maltese farmer is still in very many cases thinking as a peasant, isolated and independent, in a farming system now essentially commercial, competitive yet inter-dependent. Financial profits and losses now rule his life but the farmer is, in a disturbingly large number of cases, partly unable and partly unwilling to adapt himself and his farm to the new conditions.

178 234 434 Something of the effect of the both the economic and social aspects of the problem may be gathered from a study of a number of sample cases:

426 (a) A goats' milk producer, living just within the boundary of the Urban area of Malta (Case V), operated during 1957 with a persistent debt on the maintainance of his animals, the basis of his livelihood. During the year, the milk production of his herd varied between 70 and 30 lbs per day. This was sold for the official guaranteed prices and to this extent may be seen as a constant element. Produce from the tomna of land held by the farmer was used in the home but made only a minor contri- [451] bution to the food budget. This man keeps no accounts of the costs of maintainance of his herd and profits therefrom. He is operating in a perpetual state of debt. A table of

178 234 434 426 [654] his income from milk sold and expenses on fodder during nine months of 1957 (Case V, Summary) illustrates the progress of this debt. He looks back nostalgically to the days when his father sold milk from door to door in the Urban area and complains bitterly of his present poverty. Incongruously, however, he insists that he fully realizes that without the present Government guarantee (through the M.M.U.) he could not operate at all. He probably does realize this.

(b) Another case of operation within permanent debt is provided by two cows-milk producers who work together as a unit (Case IX) with three dozen head of cattle and a total area held of about 100 tmien used primarily for the production of fodder for the herd. They claim that the debt factor makes it impossible for them to organize their farm and herd as they would wish. For example, while they fully realize the profit to be gained by rearing calves and selling fully grown animals, they are in fact forced to sell even female calves (which they would otherwise keep) in order to pay instalments towards the cost of cows or to pay off part of the debt outstanding to the fodder merchants. This debt position makes them reluctant to take on any further loan commitments: nevertheless the Government loan offers at only 1% are definitely attractive, as a means whereby they would be able to increase the number in their herd and also mechanize their field-work without making their debt position appreciably worse. Behind all this it is clear that they are basing all their hopes on the guaranteed milk price offered by the M.M.U. and they are therefore intent on accumulating animals and thereby supplying the M.M.U with as much milk as possible.

178 234 434 654

They have no thought or care as to what might happen were the official guaranteed price to go, along with the subsidy which supports it. In fact they have singularly little appreciation of the total picture of which they form part and will be content to grumble quietly and ignorantly as long as the present artificial situation brings them a steady income. They are both illiterate (Case IX).

[212]

(c) An illiterate farmer and herdsman (Case VI) keeps no accounts of the finances of his farm working. The money of the household is "kept in one purse" from which all expenses, farm maintainance and improvement, household expenses and all 'extra' items such as the provision of dowries and Wedding costs, etc., are met. This farmer admits to having been able to save more than £1000 as a result of the 1939-45 War but observes that today they "have a hard job to earn the daily bread". He claims that the savings had all gone by 1958 - partly on improvements to the house but mostly on the purchase of cows as part of his grand design to join the hundreds of other farmers in Malta and Gozo striving to ride on the crest of the wave of the M.M.U. guaranteed price for all milk produced. It is held that this pattern is typical of Maltese farming, and particularly dairying, today. The main energies of the farmer are devoted to making as large a profit as he can while the artificially-supported market for milk is maintained.

178 234 454 654 [451]

(d) A literate part-time farmer (Case XIII) keeps accounts of the working of his farm. His second employment brings him in over £5 per week for all but a few weeks of the year and at the expense of only a small amount of his time and effort. In a normal year he reckons to make an income of about £450 of which about a third goes in costs of seeds, transport and manure, etc. and a further £50 in hiring labour. On account of the steady income from his other job farming has something of the quality of a hobby, a pursuit to be followed

178 434 241 [511]

In the first two cases the seasonal distribution of activity reflects the major points of contrast between the 'dry' and 'irrigated' operator. The herdsman stands in contrast to both of these with the care of his animals occupying a large part of every day of the year - even including Sundays and feste days when the field-working farmer expects to be off duty.

Ġanri and farming

Ġanri is a highly intelligent man in his forties who by his own efforts has progressed well beyond the limits of his very elementary formal education. He reads the Maltese-language daily 'Il-Berqa' (B/55) and keeps abreast of the school work of his children whom he encourages to learn English thoroughly as "the land cannot be divided among them all". English language is synonomous with education in his thinking, and education, in turn, he sees as the means of escape from the lowly position of the farmer in Maltese society. "We are but an Arab breed", he observes somewhat shamedly. He himself has "little faith in the Government - which should help us". Much of this attitude had its roots in the War years of 1939-45 when the siege and food shortages produced something of a Golden Age for the food-producer. The farmer has not forgotten the £10 offered by the Government for 1 cwt of potatoes. Since the return to peace-time conditions the economic position of the farmer has certainly deteriorated rapidly with the depletion in his reserves, built up during hostilities, and the rise in labour costs and in the cost of living. During the War "the farmer was not so hungry as the townsman who had to rely on the black market"; now his position is one of a constant battle with rising costs. Ġanri, as an arable farmer, lacks the steady and guaranteed income of the milk-producing herdsman. His recent moves towards pig-meat production represent an attempt to get into an apparently more profitable line.

His nephew and many other farmers, though not Ġanri himself, make the mistake of failing to distinguish between the Church and the Government in their attitude to "the authorities". Thus the nephew regards the Catholic Action movement (of which he is an active member) as somehow "helping to run the country". But even Ġanri himself thinks that the Social Action Movement (another part of the Church's Lay Apostolate) must have some part in the secular administration of the country for he believes that an application for relief for storm damage made, through the Parish Priest, to that Movement amounts to an approach to the 'Gvern' (Government) of which he is so full of criticism. The case illustrates a point made elsewhere that the Maltese farmer is still primarily village-conscious. Clearly this is not to deny, however, that his horizon today is much wider than was the case when his father regarded

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195 The War of 1939-45 gave rise to a crop of literature in Italy, Britain and other countries with solitary Malta as the object of both propaganda and admiration.

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178 As to language, it is clear the War finally killed the greater part of the pro-Italian feeling in Malta and confirmed English as the first foreign tongue of the people. It had been a language of government for more than a century but had not replaced Italian in education or at law until the inter-War period. Italian had grown to first place under the Order and had maintained its position during British nineteenth century rule except in Government and commerce.

Maltese itself, meanwhile, had not escaped from its traditional rôle as 'kitchen-tongue' and, in fact, did not replace Italian as one of the two official languages of Malta until as late as 1934. Thereby Maltese achieved, for the first time, respectability in Malta. There has since been a considerable increase in the number of books and periodicals appearing in the language, along with general education and spread of literacy among a monoglot Maltese public. Over the same period the use of Italian has declined relatively (even in its traditional strongholds, the Church and the professional classes) and the demand for English has accelerated. In fact, for a small section of the urban population of Malta, English is now the mother-tongue and Maltese the second language. An illustration of the changed linguistic picture is afforded by the following classification of daily newspapers in Malta by language for 1888 ("Il Compagno per Tutti", 1888), 1920 (B/94 - 1920, p.333), 1933-34 (B/94 - 1933-34, p.409), and 1959 (B/97 - 1959, p.99).

[204]

	1888	1920	1933-34	1959
English.....	1	1	2	2
Italian.....	3	2	2	-
English and Italian...	-	-	1	-
Maltese.....	-	-	2	2

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[212] Since Maltese has approached respectability as a literary language in its own country for only a quarter-century Maltese themselves have usually written in either Italian, as formerly, or in English, as is the case today. But, apart from this, it is clear that a Maltese language publication cannot expect to find a market outside the Islands nor among the significant section of the population, generally the professional and business classes, speaking English and Italian as well as Maltese but proud of their ability to read and write only one or both of the foreign languages and not their mother-tongue.

Maltese language publications today therefore tend solely to deal with Maltese matters and a public within Malta which lacks fluency in written English. Maltese language dictionaries and works of a philological or etymological nature are obvious exceptions to this - especially since the linguistic

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

There is a *Hares*, too, who guards all hidden treasure. 776
If you are a deserving person he will lead you to the treasure; but you must never, on pain of death by strangulation, tell anyone how you discovered it.

There are persistent tales in Malta of a priceless treasure, hidden by the builders of the prehistoric temples. This treasure is known as "The Golden Bull," and is guarded by a most terrible and powerful *Hares*. No one has ever found it because, though some few have been selected by the *Hares* to be led to its hiding place, they have been unable to keep his secret, and he has strangled them together with the friends in whom they have confided.

There seems little reason to doubt that the Golden Bull is [174]
a legacy of the old gods—possibly of Mithra or Osiris—and that the great snake-like *Hares* who guards the treasure is no other than Set, guardian of the underworld. Perhaps the Bull exists, hidden deep in one of Malta's many caves.

There may be peasants who know where it is. Amongst the moor-folk of Devon and the peasants of Ireland there are many who know the whereabouts of the "crocks of gold," buried by the Pixies and the leprechauns; but none would dare disturb "Fairy Gold." So it is with the Maltese peasant. He would be a bold man who had dealings with the "Golden Bull."

From a very tender age the little Maltese will be occupied 538
in learning his Catechism and the significance of the rites and [795]
ceremonies of his faith. Though busied in this way there will be time, in the long winter evenings, for "Fairy Tales." Usually one member of the family will be able to read. If none [212]
can read someone will certainly know all the old tales and legends by heart, and will be expert in the correct way of recounting them. The family will gather round the story-teller and all, from grandmother to youngest grandchild, will listen with close attention to tales which many of them have heard hundreds of times.